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“We’re going to take it.”

Trump’s plan to annex Gaza and the return of imperialist barbarism



US President Donald Trump speaks with Jordan's King Abdullah II in the Oval Office at the White House, Tuesday, February 11, 2025, in Washington. [AP Photo/Alex Brandon]

On Tuesday, US President Donald Trump held a meeting with King Abdullah II of Jordan after which the American president reiterated his intention to annex Gaza through force and ethnically cleanse its population.

“We’re going to have Gaza,” Trump said. “We don’t have to buy. There’s nothing to buy. We will have Gaza. ... We’re going to take it.”

Trump declared that unless Hamas releases all remaining Israeli hostages by this Saturday, “all bets are off” and “all hell will break out,” threatening to kill countless more Palestinians in a genocide whose death toll likely already exceeds 70,000.

Asked how he intends to displace the people of Gaza from their land, Trump responded, “It’s a small number of people relative to things that have taken place over the decades and centuries.”

The reporters in the room did not ask the obvious question: What “other things” was the president referencing as the precedent for using mass murder to force 2 million people from their land?

Was it the ethnic cleansing of the Native Americans and their concentration into impoverished reservations hundreds of miles from their homelands? Was it the brutal British Raj in India, which killed over 100 million people over a 40-year period? Was it the mass murder and mutilation of the people of Congo by King Leopold of Belgium, which may have led to the deaths of as many as 13 million Congolese?

Or was it the mass displacement of 6 million Jews from Germany and Europe during the Holocaust into concentration camps, where they were systematically exterminated?

Trump’s plan to displace the people of Gaza is a flagrant violation of the prohibition under the Fourth Geneva Convention of the forcible transfer of civilians during armed conflicts. And his plan to steal their land violates the 1970 United Nations treaty, ratified by the United States, which stipulates that “The territory of a State shall not be the object of acquisition by another State resulting from the threat or use of force.”

In declaring that the United States will “own” Gaza, Trump has proclaimed a new era of colonial barbarism and brutality, in which whole peoples, in their millions, will be sacrificed upon the altar of imperialist domination.

In his essay on British rule in India, Karl Marx wrote, “The profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilization lies unveiled before our eyes, turning from its home, where it assumes respectable forms, to the colonies, where it goes naked.”

In the period since the collapse of Hitler’s Third Reich and the anti-colonial uprisings that followed it, the imperialist powers have sought to cover up this nakedness. They proclaimed that they were not colonial empires but democracies, nominally upholding international law and the Geneva Conventions, even when violating them.

By bringing Trump to power for a second term, the cabal of oligarchs that governs the United States has decided to dispense with the pretense of adhering not only to the American Constitution but also to international law. From now on, foreign policy will be conducted on an illegal basis, in violation of treaties and laws that the imperialist powers themselves adopted, ratified and publicly hailed.

But if Trump does not recognize international law, international law still applies to Trump. In his opening remarks to the international military tribunal of the Nazi leaders in Nuremberg, lead prosecutor Robert H. Jackson made exactly this point regarding the leaders of Nazi Germany. He said:

A failure of these Nazis to heed, or to understand the force and meaning of this evolution in the legal thought of the world, is not a defense or a mitigation. If anything, it aggravates their offense and makes it the more mandatory that the law they have flouted be vindicated by juridical application to their lawless conduct.

Jackson continued:

If certain acts of violation of treaties are crimes, they are crimes whether the United States does them or whether Germany does them, and we are not prepared to lay down a rule of criminal conduct against others which we would not be willing to have invoked against us.

If Jackson's words applied to the Nazi regime's violation of treaties prohibiting aggressive war and territorial annexation that existed before the Second World War, they apply all the more to the leaders of American imperialism, who have the record of the prosecution, conviction and execution of the Nazi leaders to reference.

The move by American imperialism to break decisively with the framework of bourgeois legality in international law is an act not of strength but of weakness.

The British historian Tim Mason has posited a "causal connection between the social and economic crisis in Germany and the acceleration of military expansionist policies towards war in 1938-9." If Mason had to work strenuously throughout his career to prove his thesis with regard to Germany, it is visibly apparent in Trump's America.

Crisis-ridden American imperialism, addicted to debt and the constant blowing of financial bubbles, confronting a growing balance of trade crisis and an unsustainable federal debt from years of war and bank bailouts, cannot afford to keep up the appearance of decency. It is openly operating as a gang of robbers and cut-throats.

If Canada and Mexico are running balance of payments surpluses against the United States, they must be annexed to make those deficits go away. If China is surpassing the US in terms of trade and investment in Latin America, then the Panama Canal must be seized to level the playing field.

Trump's annexationist dreams, in other words, express a ruling class careening toward disaster. American imperialism's plan to solve its internal and external maladies through the creation of a globe-spanning colonial empire is a pipe dream.

Trump's efforts to dominate the world will end no better for him than Adolf Hitler's efforts to create a "thousand-year Reich," which ended with a self-inflicted shot to the head in a bunker deep beneath the ruins of Berlin.

But Trump, armed with nuclear weapons and the homicidal bloodlust of a cornered and decadent social class, is capable of doing tremendous damage in the meantime.

Trump's words must be a call to action for the workers of all countries and, most of all, the United States. US imperialism's brutal methods of mass murder and collective terror against its colonial victims will be turned against the workers of America itself.

In the struggle against the global eruption of imperialist war and colonialism, working people must take up the slogan: "Workers of the world, unite!"

Only the combined and collective international struggle of the working class, unified in a world socialist movement, can stop the imperialist barbarism that Trump is planning. The Socialist Equality Party in the United States and its sister parties of the International Committee of the Fourth International are spearheading this fight.

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